



**New North Forced to Dip into Reserves for Mayor and Councillor Gathering Following Ending of Lanyards in Lieu Program**  
Full story inside.

**Upcoming**

New North  
Annual General Meeting  
June 22, 2017  
Prince Albert Travelodge

Saskatchewan Association of  
Northern Communities

**NEW  
NORTH**

This month ..

- New North Gathering
- New North Waterworks
- Dog Control
- Funeral Expenses
- NMTA Board Announced

**Monthly Newsletter**  
**April 2017**

**April New North Gathering Sets Unreasonably High Bar for Future Such Gatherings**

It used to be the case that when organizing a New North Mayor and Councillor Gathering, the venue manager would, among other such mundane and routine inquiries as to the approximate number of attendees, the desired lunch menu, and where you'd like the projector set up, they'd stroke their chin thoughtfully and casually ask where you believed most of the bodies would pile up.

Not so anymore, and not for a long time, if we were to be honest. Such is the level of thoughtful and provocative commentary, insight and respect for decorum demonstrated by attendees at New North meetings nowadays that it's almost impossible to imagine that the basement of the Travelodge in Prince Albert was once the setting for confrontations so raw, so bare-knuckle, so seething with ill-directed emotional energy, that you needed MMA accreditation just to get in the door.

Wait; that actually was an MMA event, come to think of it.

In any case, this month, more than 120 northern municipal officials and government and other well-wishers gathered to listen, engage, network and sup on the marrow of enlightened discourse, as well as ~~baked ham~~ something not at all resembling baked ham, at the Spring Gathering, in Prince Albert.

Special guests included Sean McEachern, Lisa Rawlings and Steve Dribnenki from SUMA, who spoke about both their services, such as group benefits insurance coverage and help with procurement, as well some of the issues that SUMA is currently working on to the benefit of the northern municipalities, among others.

Sarah Keith, manager of the landfills division with the Ministry of Environment, gave a brief overview of current issues in solid waste management, including some changes that have occurred or are coming in the regulatory environment. Included in these changes is that future landfills will now have to have groundwater monitors installed.

Assistant Commissioner Curtis Zablocki, the CO of F Division, paid his first visit to a New North Gathering, and after some brief introductory comments, which included confirmation that the RCMP is beefing up their reserves to better fill positions made temporarily vacant by vacancies, answered questions about policing.

Earlier, New North Chair Bruce Fidler brought everyone up to speed on what New North has been doing, and once that very painful 10 seconds was done (just kidding!), Government Relations Assistant Deputy Minister Keith Comstock took over to bring greetings from government and to give us some exciting news.

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# NewNorth News & Updates

## **New North AGM: June 22, Travelodge**

If it seems like it was only a few months ago that you sat through a New North AGM, then dug into a plate piled to the ceiling with baked ham, potatoes au gratin with what you felt could have been hint of paprika (you were correct!) and an assortment of “dainties,” as they call them in the industry, then you’d be right. It was November, a mere 5 months ago.

Operating partly on the theory that you can’t have too many New North Gatherings, but mostly because of a legal obligation, New North is having its AGM on June 22, and at the Travelodge once again.

Look out for a registration and agenda in the next month or so. Tell your friends; everyone welcome.

## **Solid Waste Management Consultations**

Since a scathing report by the provincial auditor into how the Ministry of Environment regulates landfills in the province (see our December 2015 newsletter for coverage), the ministry has become pretty pro-active in addressing everyone’s regulatory short-comings, in addition to any other short-comings generally. Added to this, the ministry has set a target of cutting in half the number of landfills in the province over the next five years. This is a considerable challenge, and one that can only be achieved with a lot of support from stakeholders, including municipalities.

Presently and until the end of May, the ministry is asking for municipal input into a solid waste management strategy, a kind of “road map” to a future of integrated solid management systems where landfill attendants have all their own teeth. They have a discussion paper you can look at, and a survey you can fill out. Go to our web site, [www.newnorthsask.org](http://www.newnorthsask.org), for links.

The next few years should be a time of considerable landfill-related activity in the north, as we begin the move toward regional landfills served by local transfer stations. This will only be achieved through the wit, determination, energy, intelligence, and courage of those tasked with sitting in the driving seat. If you know anyone who possesses these qualities, please let us know ASAP.

## **New North Members Contribution**

Letters have been sent to mayors and councillors for this year’s New North members contribution. The member contribution is not a membership fee (since



Chair Bruce Fidler (left) is ready to pounce on any trouble-makers as Keith Comstock from GR takes the mic at this April’s Gathering.

all northern municipalities are by default New North members); it is a voluntary contribution member municipalities make to help New North be better at what we do. For 2017, the member contribution is comprised of a \$300 base fee, plus an additional .70 cents per capita. So, if your community has a population of 500 people, your municipality’s contribution would be \$300 plus \$350, for a total of \$650.

The vast majority of money collected through the member contribution (which is matched 100% by the NMTA) goes toward our research, communication and advocacy activities. Some of the research and writing going into this newsletter, for example, is funded with that money. All in all, we hope to raise about \$20,000 from our members, matched by another \$20,000 from the NMTA. Since 2005, 95% of New North’s funding has come from a grant from the NMTA.

## **Community Police Board Funding: A Different Approach**

A new year, and a new funding arrangement for CPBs. If you have anything to do with CPBs, you should know by now that instead of New North block funding meeting honoraria, CPBs will now have to go through a grant application process. Go to New North’s CPB page on our website for more information.

# From the New North Chair

BY BRUCE FIDLER, MAYOR OF CREIGHTON

Hello to all!

It was great to see such a great turnout at our last New North gathering. I think it was a very successful day with a lot of important information given and some really good discussion. We are already planning and looking forward to the June gathering.

I was supposed to attend a Northern Advisory Board meeting this week but unfortunately that had to be postponed. I will have a report for you after it does happen.

On a different note, one of my biggest pet peeves over the last 20 years has been the roads throughout the North. Our Northern residents are expected to travel these roads every day for medical, school, work and many other reasons. The condition of these roads at times are absolutely terrible but yet we have to travel over them.

There are three Area Transportation Planning committees in place throughout the North. These groups are made up of representatives from each community, First Nations and Métis representatives. The purpose of these groups is to be a liaison between the area residents, communities, business, and the

Ministry of Highways & Infrastructure. Members of these communities can bring issues and concerns forward at these meetings to representatives of the Ministry. They, then can be directed to the proper department and be put on a work list or for budget consideration. This is a very good way to have your concerns heard.

There are the three communities in place, the North Northwest Planning committee, the Athabasca Planning committee, and the North Northeast Planning committee and I sit as chair of the NNETPC. So if you have concerns regarding roads, find your committee representatives and talk to them so they can take your concerns forward.

This is just on the many groups in place to work with our Northern issues and is a very valuable one. Just contact the New North office to find out how to contact your local ATPs, or better still, give me yelp.

Thank you, and have a nice day!

**Bruce Fidler**

Chair, New North (fid@sasktel.net)

## **New North Gathering *continued* ...**

Well, exciting to some. Among the news brought by the ADM included the composition of the Northern Municipal Trust Account Management Board (see next page), newly appropriated funding for northern water and sewer projects totalling \$19 million (with the rest coming from NMTA and municipal contributions), as well as confirmation that the revenue sharing allocations would be reviewed this year.

Keith also indicated that NMTA funding may be made available for northern municipal landfill and solid waste management projects.

Closing the day was Jennifer Reid, from the Population Health Unit in La Ronge, who spoke about animal control (see article later in this newsletter).

Discussion throughout the day centred around a number of issues. Communities were concerned about the recent census, which in some cases vastly under-estimates the number of people living in northern municipalities (a solution is for Census Canada to hire locals to do the leg-work). Also briefly discussed was New North's member contribution request for 2017, the Green Lake solar project, and the merging of the Buffalo Narrows housing authority with Ile a la Crosse's last year. Closing the day, Duane Favel brought attention to the fact that it was Gerald Roy's birthday, which everyone seemed to think was pretty neat, with the possible exception of Gerald.

The next Mayor and Councillor Gathering will be at the AGM, on June 22 at the PA Travelodge. Requests for six ministers to attend have already been made.

## Big Men Wearing Camo and Hats Inside? Must be a New North Waterworks Conference

With the Spring water-mains explosion season in full swing, water operators from across the province, but mainly from the north, gathered at the Travelodge in Prince Albert for another couple of days of fine food, fine conversation and the temporary shirking of responsibility at the annual New North Waterworks Conference and Tradeshow, April 11-12.

Punctuated from time to time by the highly individualized ringtones of cell phones which had their owners jumping out of their seats and striding toward the exit uttering in hushed and insistent tones words to the effect of “get Allan [to] handle it,” operators sat through presentations from the Water Security Agency, the Operator Certification Board, and ATAP, on from among other things, the responsibilities of permittees, the new operator certification requirements, and the basics of control box diagnostics, the main of theme of which seemed to be don’t screw around with something you don’t understand.

### What are the roles and responsibilities of waterworks permit holders?

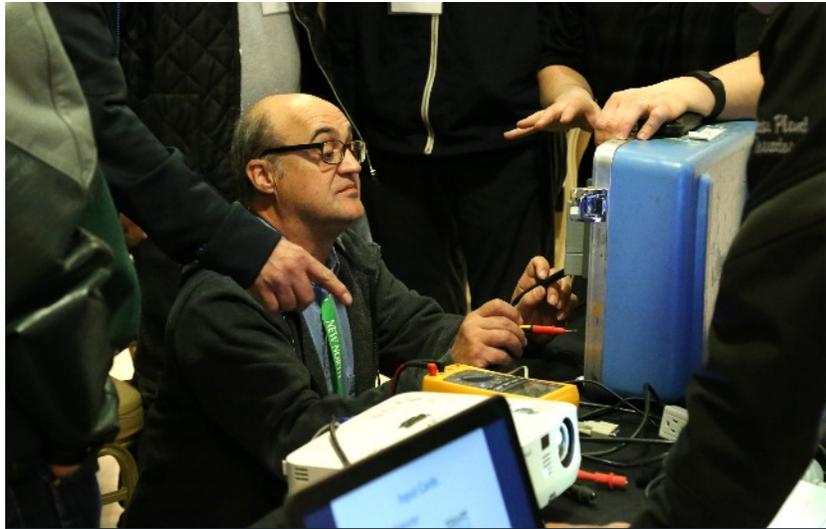
Just like with landfills, the permit holders of the local water and sewer works is the municipality. This means mayor and council are ultimately responsible for the care, maintenance and safe operation of the most important, and most expensive, piece of infrastructure in the community.

The Water Security Agency presentation, by Kerry Desjarlais and Barry Wright, broke down exactly what you’d be held accountable for in the case of something going wrong. Not covered were the good places to hide in that eventuality.

### Where do water standards come from?

Another question people often have—we are told—is where the standards for waterworks come from anyway. Turns out, the standards come from Northern America. Figures.

### New educational and training requirements for people who operate waterworks



Tensions were high and there was finger-pointing aplenty at this year’s New North Waterworks as ATAP’s Bert Gaudet sweated through his first ever defusing of an unexploded bomb. Or at least that’s what we think he is doing here; we weren’t really paying attention.

There are about 1260 active certified operators in the province, with that number growing every year. That’s reassuring, given how important having trained people in charge of the water supply is. With that said, the training and qualifications needed to become an operator can be a challenge, especially in the north, where graduation rates are low.

From now on, most new operators working in kinds of systems in operation in the north will need Grade 12 or equivalent to become certified. It used to be the case that operators could substitute experience for education; that will no longer be the case. Kelly Neuert from the Operator Certification Board noted that some communities may need to help their budding operators through a grade 12 program if they want them to become certified.

As always, a big thank-you to Kerry and the team at the WSA for helping us put the program together for this year’s waterworks. If you want to see photos of the event, or links to the powerpoints, just go to our website, [www.newnorthsask.org](http://www.newnorthsask.org). ■

## SARCAN Launches Recycling Receptacle Grant

If you’ve ever wondered why someone doesn’t have a grant program to provide funding for those beverage recycling receptacles you sometimes see in places where they recycle, then wonder no more, because SARCAN has come up with exactly that.

For northern communities with less than 5000 people, which is everyone, SARCAN will match any money you spend (to a maximum of \$500) on the purchase of beverage recycling receptacles placed in public spaces. So you’ve been thinking seriously about putting a beverage recycling thing in the community hall, the village square, or just randomly placing them around town, then this could be for you. Of course what you then do with the items you collect is totally your problem.

To get more information, contact us, or email Sean Homenick at [shomenick@sarcansk.ca](mailto:shomenick@sarcansk.ca).

## New NMTA Management Board Revealed in Dramatic Opening Monologue

*“From the dawn of time we came; moving silently down through the centuries, living many secret lives, struggling to reach the time of the Gathering; when the few who remain will battle to the last. No one has ever known we were among you... until now.” Highlander, 1986*

With the municipal elections done and dusted in October, the time was ripe for the Northern Municipal Trust Account Management Board appointments to be made.

And they were. Eventually.

At the April Mayor and Councillor Gathering, Assistant Deputy Minister Keith Comstock announced that the following northern municipal elected and non-elected officials have now been appointed to the board:

Janine Boucher (Administrator, La Loche)  
 Isidore Desjarlais (Councillor, Buffalo Narrows)  
 Duane Favel (Mayor, Ile a la Crosse)  
 Tina Rasmussen (Administrator, Green Lake)  
 Martine Smith (Administrator, Pinehouse)  
 Cory Hardcastle (Councillor, Air Ronge)  
 Carl Lentowicz (Mayor, Denare Beach)  
 Terri Daniels (Chairperson, Wollaston Lake)  
 Paula Muench (Administrator, Creighton)

Appointments are for 4 years (same as the election cycle), but generally get extended until somebody becomes ineligible (for example, by leaving office or leaving their jobs).

The board this time has a number of new faces, with Martine, Janine, Tina, Duane, Cory and Carl all getting nods for first time.

The NMTA Management Board is government-appointed, and has the job of providing advice to government on behalf of northerners on the disposition of funds in the Northern Municipal Trust Account. To learn more about the NMTA, you can take a look at our newsletter from a few months ago.

According to legend, the NMTA board was actually created after lobbying by New North. In an interesting twist of fate which you would only see in something by Shakespeare, or northern Saskatchewan, given that New North has since that time been funded by the NMTA, we are in some respects now beholden to the very thing to which we once played mid-wife. And like a typical Shakespearean tragic figure, we only ever talk about it in blank verse whilst contemplating the skull of a former employee.

The NMTA board's first meeting of its new term will be in May.

## Dying to be More Expensive for Some After July 1, so Plan Accordingly

The provincial budget handed down mid-March had some brutal news for many, but one change that potentially has a disproportionate impact on northerners is the cut in the amount Social Services will pay for funeral expenses for income assistant recipients and people on low incomes.

As of July 1, Social Services will now only pay for what they are referring to as “basic” funeral expenses. We contacted the ministry, and got the following run-down on what that means.

Previously, the ministry covered funeral expenses with a flat rate. In addition to burials and cremation, the rate included mandatory documentation, embalming if required, dressing, and even cosmetics, visitation and a funeral service in a chapel or church.

Now, the government will not only be reducing the coverage amount (from \$3850 to \$2100), but will also be limiting their coverage to what they

are calling “basic services.” This includes: basic preparation, equipment needed to provide the services, a coffin or cremation container, urn and transportation within 20 kilometres.

Not covered are: dressing, cosmetics, visitation or a funeral service.

Overall, government is expecting to save about \$1 million a year. Last year, around 400 people in the province used government assistance for burials.

We have written to the Minister for Social Services to express our concern at the changes, which hit northerners particularly hard. Northerners not only die at higher rates than anywhere else, they also access income assistance more than anyone else. If you wanted to find a policy change that seems particularly heartless, you couldn't go much further than this one.

We will update you on any progress on this file.

## THE DOG-GONE DOG PROBLEM

Chelsea Laskowski reflects on the issue of dog control in northern Saskatchewan

Earlier this month at the New North Spring Mayor and Councillor Gathering, municipal leaders offered up their take on what their communities are doing to control the dog population and what prohibits them from succeeding.

Their comments came in response to statistics for off-reserve dog bites in northern Saskatchewan provided by La Ronge-based Public Health Inspector Jennifer Reid. She told attendees that 127 dog bites were reported in 2015, up from 96 the year prior. She used real examples of the effects of those bites: among them are kids who have been permanently scarred because a dog bit their face, a young boy whose scrotum was punctured due to a dog bite, a woman who has limited mobility in her arm after a vicious dog attack.

Such reports only come to population health after people seek medical treatment for bites, and Reid said it's hard to pinpoint if dog bites are actually rising or if more people are simply seeking treatment. Regardless, for Reid and her fellow inspectors, it was frustrating that their roles only focused on reacting to bites rather than preventing them.

Reid laid out what the Population Health Unit (PHI)

has been doing on the preventative front since they met in 2015 to discuss dog overpopulation. They've created an educational campaign on how to interact with roaming or stray dogs including radio ads, an informational pamphlet, and colouring books for children.

At the conference, Buffalo Narrows Mayor Bobby Wood suggested a get-together with municipalities and the PHI to discuss a practical, implementable strategy for dealing with dog overpopulation. In response, Reid offered up her business cards to any communities that had further questions and said she'd speak with her office about the possibility of a future meeting.

With all this momentum towards improving those daunting dog bites stats, it's worthwhile to look at some of the current practices underway across the north to address the underlying issue of free-roaming dogs, particularly those who pack up and become aggressive towards humans.

Ile-a-la-Crosse recently updated its animal control bylaws so the northern village can fine people for not complying, and hired an animal protection officer to carry that out. The village is also requiring homeowners to get dog tags to licence their pets.

The specific wording of the bylaw states "the owner of the

animal shall ensure that the animal is not running at large, shall not allow a vicious dog to run at large," and has a number of other provisions.

There are varying costs for the at large fines: first offence is \$30, second is \$60 and third is \$150. There are higher fines for allowing a vicious dog to be at large and fines for "female dog in season causing a nuisance."

Long-time councillor Gerald Roy said if people do not comply or do not pay, the RCMP can be brought in or individuals can be issued paperwork to appear in court on the bylaw charge.

He took to the mic at the conference to let others know "some people complied pretty damn quick after we started handing out tickets."

The mentality behind Ile-a-la-Crosse's approach is that "it's not the dog we should be targeting, it's the pet owner," Roy said.

He said ensuring community compliance comes down to putting in a bit of elbow grease: "if there's an initiative in place, stick to it, keep pushing it, keep enforcing it and eventually people will."

Earlier this month I called Sandy Bay's village office, speaking with Mayor Paul Morin and administrator Henrietta Ray – no joke, while a pack of dogs fought outside their office window – and they seem to agree that if residents realize their municipality is serious about people keeping dogs in their yards, things will change.

At present, Sandy Bay has discussed dog overpopulation but it does not have anyone working full time in animal control, but they do have

current relevant bylaws that could be enacted or possibly updated to follow Ile-a-la-Crosse's path. For any municipalities interested in the full text of Ile-a-la-Crosse's update bylaw, feel free to e-mail me at [chelsealaskowski@gmail.com](mailto:chelsealaskowski@gmail.com) for a copy or contact the village office.

### **What keeps a municipality from acting on dog control?**

Well, there are lots of reasons.

In part, it's hard to keep people in a dedicated animal control position for an extended period of time, which Reid mentioned at the conference. She said lots of people disagree on confinement of animals, making it a lot harder to enforce bylaws when you're living in that community.

Something that wasn't explored in depth at the conference was the reality that people in these positions are destined to need to kill a dog at some point. Feral dogs are dangerous.

Regardless of a community's stance on culls, when people's safety is at risk due to a dog/dogs, it's not a choice, it's a necessity.

Ray and others tell me that dogs can sense when someone has killed a dog. This makes the person who does the killing (in Sandy Bay they contract someone out) more susceptible to animal attacks, which also explains why a municipality's animal control job would be a tough one to fill long-term.

Also, Woods points out with all the other things municipalities deal with, it's tough to afford a bylaw officer.

Reid said it's been suggested that municipalities share that dedicated position, which certainly warrants more discussion in the future.

Ray brought up another reason it's tough to act on dog control: many northern municipalities are right next to a reserve. So even if those municipalities put resources into dog control, as Reid said, "dogs do not recognize community borders." As a municipality it would be quite disheartening to put a lot of effort into ensuring dog owners in a municipality are responsible when free-roaming dogs from a nearby reserve are still wandering the village.

Finally, dog holding facilities are an expensive option for containing strays. The infrastructure and staffing costs of an SPCA-type facility are not priorities for most northern communities. The costs of travelling to a vet to spay/neuter a community's dogs are also limiting.

### **Path to dog population control**

Any solution to dog overpopulation must address the many challenges, and luckily there are lots of things municipalities can do to get started and a lot of supports available.

There are more than six different animal rescues or humane societies that travel to or are established in the north, yet there is often limited communication between these rescues and the municipalities. Strengthening relationships between the two can open a lot of doors. For example, I've talked with northern rescue volunteers who face opposition from residents when it comes to their work. A municipality has the ability to increase visibility of rescue efforts, gain community buy-in and show people they're taking ownership of dog control solutions. By partnering with a municipality and keeping leadership in the know, volunteers might see those edges soften a bit.

Regardless of how a municipality cements their relationship with rescue groups – maybe something simple like making a motion at a town council meeting to acknowledge the group's effort, or even creating a dog population plan in partnership with those groups – it's something that can be done fairly quickly and with little expense.

Multiple different northern communities have cited having past relationships with Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM) where they held spay and neuter clinics. Now, I'm not sure what happened to that – perhaps municipalities got too busy, or the WCVM did – but it doesn't seem there are many municipalities doing that at present. Either way, it's worth looking into reviving the relationship with the WCVM.

To address dog overpopulation, partnerships with municipalities and nearby reserves are a must. That's yet another relationship worth building.

Finally, while the cost of a dog holding facility is expensive, I've heard a number of leaders say they'd be interested in a regional model where a facility is shared. That idea would take municipal partnerships, funding from a number of levels of government, and a lot of planning.

Those are just a few ideas on a complicated topic. And while it's daunting to see all the challenges the north faces on dog control, Reid indicated things need to change or else the health and safety – and lives – of people in the north will continue to be in danger. ■

**FROM THE CEO**  
Matt Heley

The provincial budget cast light on a little known, and more or less taken for granted (no pun intended), source of revenue for the municipal

sector: grants in lieu of taxes (GIL). What are grants in lieu of taxes? Basically, because provincial governments (and by extension, government entities) are constitutionally exempt from paying taxes to municipalities, they instead pay them a grant for the equivalent amount of property tax. There are two main types of grants in lieu: those paid for government buildings, which comes from the Ministry of Government Relations, and those paid by the crown corporations, and more specifically, Sasktel. Saskpower does not pay grants in lieu (in fact, in a small irony, SARM members passed a resolution a few years ago asking that Saskpower pay GIL).

The recent issue with Saskpower and SaskEnergy cutting their grants in lieu to 109 municipalities in the province initially confused everyone, because no one thought they even did that. In fact, the payments were not GIL of taxes at all; rather, the payments were part of an agreement that the crown made with municipalities compensating them for their loss of revenue when Saskpower took the monopoly rights over power generation, an agreement that goes back about 70 years.

In the weeks following the budget, perhaps in reaction to the outcry after the Saskpower move, the government has said that all sources of municipal revenue from the province are on the table. This is either the equivalent of yelling “fire”

after your house has already burned down, or they could be serious.

What would this mean? It would mean a great deal. If we just look at government buildings and Sasktel facilities in northern Saskatchewan, we estimate that the northern municipal sector receives about \$400,000 annually in GIL. About \$110,000 of that is from Sasktel, going to the NMTA (which uses it to fund things like the Northern Water and Sewer Program, among many others). Sandy Bay gets about \$12,000 from Sasktel, with most other municipalities getting less than \$5,000 each. The Town of La Ronge receives more than \$90,000 for the government building there, and would by far be the biggest loser if government decides to eliminate grants in lieu of taxes. All in all, the Ministry of Government Relations, on behalf of Central Services, pays about \$176,000 to the north in the form of GIL.

It’s a worrying possibility that government might use revenue sharing as a bargaining tool to begin chipping away at these other sources of revenue. Although the sector would still come out on top (combined, the GIL paid by the Ministry of Government Relations and Sasktel is about \$14 million annually—just 5% of the MRS pool of \$250 million, and less than the \$20 million the MRS pool fell by this year), what would stop government from then deciding to chip away at revenue sharing as well? We’re looking at a thin end of the wedge scenario here, and one that the sector as a whole, including the north and the rurals, need to stand together on.

**About New North ...**

Since 1996 New North has been the voice of the municipalities of Northern Saskatchewan. Our goal, as defined by our mission statement, is to advocate, negotiate and initiate improvements in well-being of the residents of the Northern Saskatchewan Administrative District. Organized on the basis of strength through unity, New North partners with all northern stakeholders, from government and non-government agencies, associations and First Nations, to enhance the quality of life, create opportunities and build better futures, for the people of the north.

**New North Executive**

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Mayor Robert St.Pierre (Deputy Chair)  
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Mayor Mike Natomagan  
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